LIVING TOGETHER

578 repeatedly they intervene, and seek to set things right by the
627 pressure of their personality. They ridicule, admonish and threaten the wrongdoer, and leave it at that. This intervention is often effective and succeeds in achieving the desired result. Disputes may be specially referred to influential and impartial elders, and thus a settlement is sought without the necessity of having to appear
692 before the village council. When these efforts fail, or when the
674 seriousness of the offence or dispute warrants it, it is taken to the headman or to one of the elders with a specific request that it be decided by the village council. On the other hand, elders may take cognizance of a serious matter and may themselves bring it to the notice of the village council. Of course all cases of murder, serious theft, and grievous bodily injury, as well as of default in payment of substantial loans are taken to the criminal and civil courts. Abduction and adultery can be referred to law courts; but generally they are taken either to the village council or to the caste council. Misconduct with a married or unmarried woman, running away with a married woman, default in fulfilling the terms and conditions of a marriage contract may similarly be referred to either or both the caste council and the village council. Of the two, whichever happens to be more powerful and effective attracts most of these marginal cases to itself. Personal disputes, minor property and land disputes, sex offences and conflicts arising out of breach of contract generally come up for hearing and decision before the village council.

695 The composition of the village council has been described earlier.[1] When cases come up for hearing before it, the proceedings are carried on with considerable dignity. Available evidence and eye-witnesses are examined. The motive for the offence, and the situation in which it was committed—particularly its immediate cause, as well as presence or absence of provocation—are also taken into account. Outwardly an attitude of objectivity and impartiality is maintained by everyone; although in reality the rival factions within the council try to tip the scale their own way so that the evidence may later be construed in such a way that it may prove advantageous to the client to whom they have already promised their support. At the time of actual decision the parties to the dispute have to withdraw, allowing the council freedom to discuss and analyse the issues involved. Divergent and often contrary opinions may be expressed by the rival factions at this stage.

1 [cf. cat. 116, pp. 45-6, --ANALYST]

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rooms. The school buildings have been erected at the cost of the villagers. Efforts are being made to provide more accommodation. The school trains pupils for the Kanarese Lower Secondary Examination and instruction is given in Kanarese. Now efforts are being made to open classes in English and also to open a school exclusively for girls. There are about fifty boys in attendance and about fifty girls. School is held from 6-30 to 10-30 in the morning and from 2 to 6 in the evening. No time is allowed for play at all. Instruction is in Kanarese, although the language the people speak is Telugu.

The number of persons who know how to read the vernacular is 131; fifteen or sixteen can read and write English.

There are about thirty or forty books almost all in Sanskrit and Kanarese.

A night school has recently been opened. It has twenty on the rolls, mostly adults. Average attendance five.

Village administration.—There is a panchayat composed of five members. The main work of the panchayat lies in the field of village improvement in the different branches of education, sanitation, etc.

There is a patel and a shanbhog. The shanbhog's duty lies in keeping the village accounts. The patel is concerned with the general oversight of the village and the collection of revenue. There are four servants, two for police purposes and the two others concerned in the collection of revenue.

Sanitary administration.—The panchayat is concerned with the sanitary administration of the village. The panchayat holds meetings when occasion arises and takes steps to improve the sanitation of the village. Every Monday each family supplies half a day's labour, compoundable by a money payment of an anna. This does what is needful for the sanitation of the village. The panchayat exercises a general oversight in these matters. The Sanitary Inspector and the District Health and Sanitary Officer inspect the village often.

There is a police sub-station with a daffadar and five police constables. During nights, three other men watch the village; their services are purely voluntary and unpaid.

The higher authorities are the Amildar, Assistant Commissioner, and the Deputy Commissioner. The Amildar is the only official with whom there is contact at all often. The others visit the village about once or twice in a year. There is a resident shaikdar or revenue inspector.

Crime.—There have been practically no crimes punishable with capital punishment hitherto. Whatever crime there has been consists only of burglaries and minor thefts. These too are rare. For the past six years there has been only one burglary (in 1916); valuables were lost to the value of Rs. 150.

No villagers are engaged in litigation. Almost all civil disputes are decided in the village itself by the panchayat.

History and prospects.—There has been economic deterioration due to the scarcity of rains and the consequent failure of crops. The ryots have been obliged to borrow and this is very well evidenced by the amount of rural indebtedness. No remission is

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Socially, it increases drunkenness in the lower classes; and I find more crimes in summer than in other seasons.

But it has turned the honest and sympathetic ryots into greedy money-lenders and capitalists. It has increased the lust for gold. True that the poorer classes have an opportunity of clearing off their family debts; true that they find sufficient food to eat in summer at least; true that there is more money in the village now than 20 years ago. But equally is it true that there are more debts now; that the gulf between the rich and the poor is widened more and more; that the once poor are now poorer and the once rich now richer. There is greater struggle, greater competition, and greater rises and falls of life.

Economic history of the village.—When compared with fifteen years ago, the village has, on the whole, progressed economically. True that estates once united are now split up into fragments; and that the once poor have now become poorer. True that there are cases where people borrow money and purchase land with it; and then sell it again to clear off that debt some years later. Still the village has improved. There is increase and improvement in agriculture. Many fields that were once forest are now brought under cultivation. There is more money in the village now than 20 years ago, more produce is now exported from the village than before. The introduction of the railway near by has revolutionized the commercial condition of the village. Prices have risen both of the commodities produced and of land in general, three or four-fold. There is a greater inflow of foreign goods into the village. Kerosene oil has completely driven out castor oil. There are sixteen Japanese wind-proof lamps in the village. The standard of living has decidedly been raised. Among the lower castes to eat solid food was a luxury; conjee, prepared of korra and ragi, was the food for all the lower castes, including Sudras. Now they all eat rice and cholam and wear better clothing. But the money is ultimately finding its destination into the hands of the rich money-lenders. Formerly there was enough corn in the land and there was a sort of self-sufficiency. Now there are more debts, consequently more ruin of families with the higher rates of interest, and greater servitude and misery.

If the Government were to open a sugar factory and utilize the jaggery, both the Government and the villagers would be profited. Wells can be very profitably sunk in the fields. But the ryots never do it, though it costs only Rs. 200. A ryot is prepared to spend even Rs. 1,500 in litigation but not Rs. 200 for a well in his fields, even though he is rich and knows that it is profitable. By example they may improve.

The Brahmans have almost lost their former property for want of any profession, while they incur heavy expenses for marriages, etc. Only one family is now well off. The Vaisyas too have lost their former lands by litigation, marriages, and other expenses. On the whole, the Sudras have grown richer, both with agriculture and the jaggery trade, and the rise of prices for their produce. The weavers, washermen, the Panchamas, many of the Sudras, are growing poorer; they are selling off the little lands they have for debts and other expenses.

Lands are sold chiefly to clear off old debts, though there are some cases where profits tempt people to purchase or sell. The

[1 i.e. The seasonal nature of industrial employment--Analyst]

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796 from Rs. 100 to Rs. 150, largely spent on drink. The priests of the goddess are low caste people, chiefly the washerman caste. They get new cloths as presents. The whole celebration is barbarous and repulsive.

624 *The village administration.*—There is no panchayat in the village. The village officers consist of a karnam, a munsif, and three servants. The karnam keeps the village accounts, while the munsif collects the revenue and attends to small criminal cases. The munsif does not generally care to try civil cases even within his province; they all go to the District Munsif's court.

364 Nobody attends to the village sanitation, though the munsif is expected to do so. The villagers too do not care to help him in his work. The Sanitary Inspector comes once in a year, and quietly goes away with satisfactory remarks from the easy chair in his note book. He being the one officer for two or three taluks, cannot pay much attention to one taluk in particular; besides he also has engineering work.

625 The police station is seven miles away. When crimes of extraordinary nature take place, the munsif reports the same to the police, who come and conduct enquiries. Most of the crimes are hushed up. Police enquiry is a sham. So is the night patrolling, which is the duty of the village servants.

692 The munsif is expected to hear petty crimes; but many cases that might have been decided here go to the Magistrate's court.

696 Many crimes have been left undetected, and the criminals unpunished, crimes which were horrible and plainly proved. As locally interpreted, the effect of the Evidence Act is such as to render the most proved case null and void for "want of proper evidence." When a murderer once escapes easily from punishment, another is at once encouraged. All the villagers know that it is these considerations that encouraged a man engaged in litigation to murder another who was about to give evidence against him. That case went unpunished. Such is the case with most murders. In fact, most men engaged in important litigation are afraid for their

● 674 lives in this village. In three years there have been four murders in the neighbourhood of the village, two killed in connection with litigation and two in connection with robbery from the person.

691 There is much litigation. About 45 cases are filed every year. Of these twenty to twenty-five will be for non-clearance of debts, and fifteen to twenty for land disputes. The villagers do not seem to show any hesitation or fear in resorting to the courts. The half educated Brahman in the village, acting as an agent for a vakil, with no other profession, tries to earn his livelihood by creating enmity and disputes among ignorant families and dragging them to the courts. Thus several families which were once considered very rich have been ruined. One family of Komatis, for example, with a property of about Rs. 20,000, was sued by some relations for a partition of the estate. The Vaisya refused all compromise in the earlier courts, pursued the case at enormous expense through the three courts, till he finally lost the whole estate in the High Court. In the end, the family of twelve children, with not an inch of land for support, and no means of liquidating the debts contracted for the court expenses, have sold their big house and gone away to the Agency tracts as beggars to fill their bellies. There are many families in the village similarly ruined.